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Revolutionary Soldiers in Putnam County

BY W. H. RAGAN

From the Papers of the Putnam County Historical Society.

IT is rather remarkable that Putnam County should have furnished a home for any survivor of the Revolutionary struggle. When we remember that a period of more than forty years intervened between the close of the Revolutionary War and the pioneer settlements in Putnam, and when we remember, in addition, that Putnam County is situated almost a thousand miles from the scenes of that great struggle, it is, as I have stated, rather remarkable that veterans of that war, the youngest of whom must have been nearing his sixtieth year, should have made their way across the mountains and through the wilderness to found new homes in our then sparsely settled country. That some did thus migrate in their old age to become citizens of our county is beyond the question of doubt.

It is with the hope of stimulating investigation that may lead to the discovery of all those who once had their homes within the limits of our county that I have consented to prepare this paper, in which I shall speak of those only of whom I have some personal or well-authenticated knowledge. There is a small section of country lying immediately north and east of the village of Fillmore and embracing but a few square miles of territory, at least not exceeding a half dozen, in which five survivors of the Revolutionary War spent their last days on earth, and in which their sacred ashes still remain. Three of the five the writer very distinctly remembers, the others dying but a short time before his recollection.

I doubt if there is an area so small within the limits of the county, or even the State, where so many patriots of our War of Independence spent their last days. This is, perhaps, a mere coincidence, as I know of no community of interests that could have thus brought them together. Indeed, they had been,

for aught I know, entire strangers to each other. Certainly there were no close ties of consanguinity existing among them. Hence, I conjecture that their settlement in such near proximity was not by design or purpose on their part.

The area in which the patriots resided embraced a small portion of the adjacent townships of Floyd and Marion. Three of them resided in the former, and two in the latter-named townships. At least three of the five came to this county with their families, the others perhaps coming with children or friends. Abraham Stobaugh, Silas Hopkins, Samuel Denny, John Bartee and Benjamin Mahorney were the worthy patriots of whom I shall speak. Their deaths occurred in the order in which they are named.

Abraham Stobaugh came from Montgomery County, Virginia, in company with his son, the late Jacob Stobaugh, and settled in the southern portion of Floyd township. He was the grandfather of Mrs. Anderson M. Robinson, of Filmore, and of the late Mrs. Owen, the deceased wife of our fellow-townsmen and ex-County Recorder, George Owen. From Mrs. Robinson I learn that this patriot died in September, 1836, and that he was buried with the honors of war. A militia company from Greencastle, commanded by the late Col. Lewis H. Sands, fired the salute at the grave. He was buried in a private cemetery on the old Gorham farm in Marion township. There is to-day no trace of this grave remaining, none at least that would identify it among those of numerous friends and relatives. Mr. Stobaugh left quite a large number of descendants, some of whom still remain in the neighborhood of his former home.

Silas Hopkins, if tradition may be credited, was a native of the city of Baltimore, and a supposed relative of the late millionaire merchant and philanthropist, Johns Hopkins, whose name will go down to posterity in connection with the great university his beneficence endowed. Silas Hopkins was the father of the somewhat noted John Deroysa Hopkins, whose eccentric characteristics will be remembered by many in Putnam County. He was also the father of the late

Mrs. Thomas Gorham, with whom he made his home. Patriot Hopkins was in some particulars not unlike his eccentric son. His death occurred near the close of the fourth decade of this century.

How long, or when, and at what period of the Revolutionary struggle, and in what branch of the service, or under what command these patriots served, is perhaps unknown to living mortals; but that they were Revolutionary soldiers there is not the shadow of a doubt. Jacob Stobaugh, the son of Abraham was a veteran of the war of 1812, and some of the descendants of Silas Hopkins laid down their lives to preserve that government which he gave his best years to the establishment of. Even his eccentric son, John D., was for a time a Union soldier in the War of the Rebellion. Although at the time beyond the age of military service, he enlisted in Company C, 70th Regiment, and served a part of the second year of the war as a member of that regiment, which was commanded by the only living ex-President of the United States. At least four grandsons served in the Union Army, two of whom, Silas and Thomas Gorham, laid down their lives in their country's service, and now rest side by side in the village cemetery at Fillmore.

There is something sadly pathetic in the story of the death of these patriotic grandsons of Silas Hopkins. They had survived the mishaps of war from 1861 to 1865, when one of the brothers began to decline in health. The war was over, and they really were needed no longer at the front. So the sick brother was given a furlough to his home, and for company the well one was sent with him. On the Vandalia train, while halting at the Greencastle station, and within six miles of home and friends, the invalid brother quietly breathed his last. The survivor tenderly supported the lifeless form of his brother in his arms until the train reached Fillmore, where kind and loving friends performed the last sad rites. But one short month elapsed until the remaining brother was gently laid by his side "in the shadow of the stone."

In those early days most every farm had its private burial place, in which the members of the family and friends were

interred. The Gorham family was not an exception to this general rule. On the north end of this farm, known to the older residents as the Judge Smith or Gorham farm, and now owned by Albert O. Lockridge of this city, and the first land in the township conveyed by the government to a private individual, is one of these neglected burial places. The location is obscure, and but for a few rough stones, one of which bears the indistinct inscription "W. B.," there is naught to indicate that it is a pioneer cemetery in which many of the early settlers sleep their long sleep. Here rest the mortal remains of Abraham Stobaugh and Silas Hopkins, of Revolutionary memory. But a few years will elapse until this little grave yard will be entirely unknown and forgotten, and posterity will then have naught but tradition as a guide to this spot where lie two of the founders of our Republic.

Samuel Denny resided in the southern part of Floyd Township on what is now known as the Gravel Pit Farm, which is owned by the Big Four Railway. His home was with an adopted daughter, Mrs. Isaac Yeates, he having had no children of his own. Mr. Denny first settled in Warren Township, where his wife died and was buried. He was the great uncle of our fellow-townsmen, James T. Denny, Esq. Patriot Denny had long predicted that his death would occur on the 4th of July, which prediction was verified by the fact. In the early summer of 1843, his rapid decline was noted and on the Nation's sixty-seventh birthday, his gentle spirit took leave of earth. I well remember Mr. Denny, and have him pictured in my mind as a most venerable personage. Indeed he was highly respected and honored by all who knew him. I have already referred to the fact that he had no children of his own. It is, however, a well-verified tradition that he reared thirteen orphan children by adoption, thus showing the great benevolence of his character. He was buried in Warren Township, at what is known as Deer Creek Baptist Church, by the side of his deceased wife, and, I have no doubt, with the honors of war so well befitting the day and the occasion.

John Bartee's home was on a fraction of the same farm on

which Patriot Denny died, and to which he had, in some way, acquired a fee-simple title. There were ten acres of the little homestead on which he resided. He lived in an humble log cabin, with but one room. Here in company with his feeble-minded second wife, and still more imbecile daughter, he spent his last days in extreme poverty. The family were objects of charity. Through the exertions of the late A. B. Matthews, himself a member of the Board of County Commissioners, that body made a small appropriation, I am unable to say just how much, in support of this superannuated veteran; but with all this, only a small share of the good things of earth fell to the lot of our worthy patriot in his declining years. At the early age of sixteen, he participated in the siege of Yorktown and the capture of Lord Cornwallis. His death occurred in February, 1848, and he was buried in the little graveyard on the Yeates farm near by his former home.

Benjamin Mahorney, the fifth and last survivor, and perhaps among the very last of his race, died in the summer of 1854, more than seventy years after the close of the great struggle in which he was an active participant. His home, like that of Patriot Hopkins, was in the northern portion of Warren township, and immediately on the line of the Big Four Railway, one mile east of the little station of Darwin. He resided with his son, Owen Mahorney, who made him comfortable in his last days. He was a most venerable object, known to the people of the neighborhood as worthy of veneration and respect. His hair was white as the driven snow. Patriot Mahorney was a Virginian, and enlisted from Farquire county, in that State, in the spring of 1779, for a period of eighteen months. He served under Captain Walls, in Colonel Buford's regiment of Virginia militia. His regiment met the British cavalry, under Colonel Tarleton, at Waxham, North Carolina, and were repulsed with great loss in killed, wounded and prisoners. Patriot Mahorney was one of the few who escaped injury or capture. His term of enlistment closed on October 25, 1780, nearly seventy-four years prior to his death in this county. From the records of our County Clerk's office, I learn that he made application for a pension at the April term of court in

1833, and that he was at that time seventy-three years of age. From this record I also learn the above facts concerning his enlistment and service in the patriot cause.

At the time of Benjamin Mahorney's death there was in the neighborhood, a military company with headquarters at the village of Fillmore, and commanded by James H. Summers, a Mexican War veteran, and afterwards Colonel of an Iowa regiment in the War of the Rebellion. Captain Summers called his company together and fired a salute over the open grave of the last survivor of Revolutionary memory in that neighborhood. The interment was at what is known as the Smythe graveyard, and one mile east of Fillmore. It is probable that the grave of Mr. Mahorney might still be identified. If so, it should become an object of public care and attention for all time to come.

An incident occurred after the burial of Patriot Mahorney, when Captain Summers, with his company, returned to Fillmore to store their guns in the company's armory. A member of the company, Noah Alley (also a Mexican veteran, and afterwards killed at Cedar Mountain, Virginia, as a member of the 27th Indiana Regiment) through an awkward mishap, thrust the fixed bayonet of his musket through his leg just above the ankle, making a serious and painful wound. The village boys out of juvenile curiosity had gathered about the military company, and were many of them witnesses to this unfortunate accident. The writer well remembers the impression it made on his youthful mind, and this incident will go down in his memory, associated with the death and burial of the last survivor of the Revolutionary struggle in that part of the county, if not in the State.

Of these five Revolutionary patriots, two only, Hopkins and Stobaugh, have living descendants in our midst. Denny, it will be remembered, had no children of his own. Barte's wife and daughter are long since dead, and the younger Mahorney, after his father's death, together with his family, removed to Fountain County, where they have been lost to sight, in the busy throng that now throbs and pulsates throughout our land.